
MAKING MEDICAL DECISIONS

It is the Guardian's responsibility to make decisions based on the Ward's needs. Medical decisions can be very difficult to make, and the well-being of your Ward depends on making the right choice.

Talking to the Doctor: Insist on Clarity

Doctors often use vague language when explaining the risks and benefits associated with certain options. It is the responsibility of the doctor to inform you in a clear and understandable manner so you can make an informed decision. Unfortunately, not all doctors do this. If the doctor is using words you do not understand, it is your responsibility as the Guardian to request clarification.

Questions to Ask the Doctor

- What is the proper name of the procedure and what does it mean?
- What are the risks?
- What is the expected outcome of the procedure?
- What are the other possible outcomes of the procedure?
- Why is it being done now instead of later?
- Who will perform the procedure?
- Does the procedure require a specialist, and does the person performing the procedure have that expertise?
- Have there been consultations with other doctors? If so, who?
- How much does the Ward's disability interfere with performing the procedure? Has the doctor planned for this?
- What care is required after the procedure?
- How long is recover? Will there be discomfort?
- How will any medications affect the Ward's activities, appetite?

Take Time to Research All the Options

Many medical decisions are made under extreme pressure. It is important for the Guardian to know that, although convenient for the schedule of the doctor, making decisions on the spot may be inappropriate. It is rare that an illness requires immediate action (unless it is an emergency).

It may be safe to postpone the decision for a few days or longer in order to weigh all available options. When a doctor (or anyone else) insists on a quick decision, ask if your Ward's life is in jeopardy if the decision is delayed a few days. If not, use the time to become more familiar with the situation and the options so the best medical decision can be made. You may also consider seeking a second opinion.

10 Questions to Ask About All Medications

1. What is the name of the medication and what is it supposed to do?
2. When and how is it taken? With Water? Food? Empty Stomach?
3. How long should it be taken? Are there refills?
4. Does the medication contain anything that could cause an allergic reaction?
5. Will this medication interact with any other medications currently taken?
6. Will this medication affect day to day activities?
7. What should be done if a dosage is skipped?
8. Will there be any side effects? What should be done if adverse side effects are experienced?
9. Is a generic version of this product available?
10. What is the best way to store this medication?